

RECKLESS RALPH'S

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.
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COMRADES

By Harold C. Holmes

At the beginning of the century, Street & Smith brought out several new weeklies as companions to Tip Top, Nick Carter and Diamond Dick, Jr. All of these new weeklies were short lived. One of these new weeklies was Comrades, tales of railroad-ing with Tom Wright as the hero. I first read all the series of Comrades as a boy in grammar school in Springfield, Mass. About 20 years ago I read the series thru for the second time and have just completed reading them all for the third time. My last reading of them has only confirmed me in my opinion that they are better written than many other series of much longer life. Yet when issued they never were a general favorite among the boys I knew. Among, say, about a dozen pals at school, I remember only one other boy and myself really loved this weekly. A few read it occasionally, others turned them down as "too tame."

The boys went stronger for the railroad stories in Pluck and Luck which were packed with violent action. The Comrades stories were extremely probable. By that I mean that thru the whole series you do not find incidents so overdrawn that they become fantastic. They were plausible tales of stirring and thrilling and sometimes even commonplace events that might well have taken place in the life of any railroader in 1900 on mid and far western railroad.

As Tom Wright goes on thru the series he gradually gathers around

him a band of true and loyal companions who are carried on thru the stories. But there is one noticeable difference from most all other weeklies. In most others' series the hero has an ever-true and loyal chum who continued from first to last thru the stories. Not so in Comrades. Tom Wright never had among his friends and supporters anyone raised to the position of chum. His friends were all on an equal level.

One thing has struck me each time I have read the series and that is the utter failure of the author to use HOME in the stories. The strongest device in my opinion that was used in novels to make the characters seem to actually live was HOME, the meeting with the parents and relatives and occasional action in the home. Those characters lived, they had a place that was home and they went there, once in awhile at least. Almost every other novel series used HOME even where you would least expect it, such as detective series. In the English Union Jack, Sexton Blake and Tinker's home on Baker Street with Mrs. Bardell as housekeeper is almost as familiar to readers of Union Jack as Sexton Blake himself. And for those familiar with Nick Carters, Nick's home on Madison Ave. is almost as familiar to you as your own. Yet in Comrades we find only this. Tom had attended Bloomington College. He had an invalid father and several junior brothers and sisters. Can you beat that; several brothers and sisters, you don't even know how many. That shows how completely the author ignored the home ties. Tom never visited

home and never wrote nor had a letter from home as far as we know.

Comrades are easily divided into distinct groups of stories, the first group contains the issues from 1 thru 14 and should be called the

C. & M. RR Series

In #1 Tom is in the Freight Claim Adjuster's office of the C. & M. In this story are introduced three characters which carry on thru the series, Ruth Gibson, daughter of the superintendent of the C & M, who when misfortune comes later shows she can "take it." Edith Hollister, a poor girl earning her living as a telegraph operator and supporting her younger brother, Arthur. Harry Penfield the son of a train dispatcher who becomes friends with Tom. From #2 thru 9 Tom was station agent at Melrose, a little village, important only that it was the junction of a short branch line that ran up to Berwick, a summer lake resort. Part of Tom's duties were to operate a train a day on a round trip to Berwick and back. In #9 Edith Hollister who is telegraph operator at Tower W near Melrose is in a terrible mess with her father who has shown up with a charge of forgery hanging over his head.

To be near Edith to help her in her trouble Tom refuses promotion to be station agent at Decatur only to find that his successor at Melrose had already been appointed. So Tom not only failed to be near Edith but had kicked himself out of a job. In #10 Tom goes back to the city and takes the first job he can get with the C & M. It was as a freight handler at the freight depot. A very tough job and a very tough gang of freight thieves to deal with.

In #11-12-13-14 Tom is fireman on freight trains. In #14 Tom offends Supt. Midgely and is discharged from the C & M.

The second group of stories should be called the

A & R RR Series

Contained in issues 15 thru 38. Many interesting stories in this series. Ruth Gibson's father loses his money and she has to go to work. During this series two characters are introduced who remain as part of Tom's real friends, Jabez Stebbins a countryman and Fred Farley. In the last issue of this series #38 Mr. Benson Pres. of the A & R is trying to defraud a Mr.

Raymond in a business deal. Mr. Raymond sends his daughter on a mission carrying a very vital business paper. Tom helps the girl when Benson tries to get the papers away from her. He is successful in doing that but is fired from the A & R as a result. Of the many fine stories in this series #34 to me is one of the finest I ever read. Titled Tom Wright's Peril; or, The Lightning Express Afloat. Edith Hollister is still working for the C & M RR and is night operator at Tower at Brocton. This night Ruth Gibson is spending the evening in the Tower to keep Edith company. A man comes climbing up into the Tower, half sick, half mad he almost scares the girls to death. He soon sinks into a half stupor and in his delirium tells of a plot to wreck Tom's train. Tom is an engineer on the A & R and here at Brocton the tracks of the two roads parallel for a distance.

A most terrible rain and electric storm comes up. Ruth goes to the little town to get medicine for the sick man and on way back falls and is rescued by Edith from death under a train. Lightning strikes the Tower burning out the wires and half blinding Edith. They now can get thru no telegraph message to the Junction to warn Tom. Ruth runs to the station but the wires are burned out there also. Ruth then runs thru the storm to the A & R tracks. Places a lantern to warn Tom but wind blows it over. Tom had seen the light and slowed down but when light no longer shows he starts to speed up again. Ruth swings onto the last car. Door locked, she climbs to top of car crawls to opening between that car and the next and pulls signal cord and Tom is stopped. Ruth explains to Tom and he backs his train onto a siding. A fast freight that had been following Tom's train goes past him in spite of Tom's efforts to stop it and goes thru the broken bridge into the river. The trap that had been laid for Tom. A very fine story.

The third group of stories should be called

Pacific & Midland RR Series

Contained the issues from 39 thru 45. The pictures on the first 38 issues of Comrades were all railroad scenes, #39 being the first picture to be different. It shows Tom in a wilderness on horseback, being fired at

from a thicket. Tom had gotten a job with the P & M RR and was sent to Montana to report on the advisability of running a branch line to a new gold find in that region. Does a fine job and is made division supt. of a small northwestern division of the P & M with headquarters at Dogwood. Has some stirring times on that job. The closing issue of this series #45 to me at least is the best story of all the Comrades. So finely written that you are right with Tom all thru the story. Titled Tom Wright's Lightning Dash; or, A Railroad on Skates.

Tom is on a 30 days leave-of-absence from his post with the P & M. He is on a train of the Denver and Rio Grande RR. Had meant to leave the train at Parrott, Colo. but fell asleep and got off at next station, Silverado. It is night, and 22 degrees below zero. Tom goes to a boarding house and next morning meets his friend Fred Farley who had been with a Denver newspaper but now is a railroad detective with the D & RG RR. Farley introduces him to a Ben (Babe) Hawkins who is prominent in many stories after. To Tom's great surprise Edith Hollister comes into the boarding house. She is night operator at Silverado. Hawkins introduces Edith to Tom as his fiancée, a blow to Tom.

Tom is down this way on a mission for Mr. Gibson, former supt. of the C & M RR. He is to try and buy for Mr. Gibson a railroad right-of-way in that section from a Mr. Doddridge at Parrott, Colo. Edith Hollister engagement to Babe Hawkins is really a fake or ruse. Edith had been pestered by the attentions of a man she despised and as Hawkins was a friend from childhood she announced her engagement to Hawkins to save her from annoyance from other men. Tom leaves on a morning train without finding out the truth about this. Tom sees Mr. Doddridge at Parrott and gets a price on the right-of-way. When Tom leaves to take a train at Lansing Siding, he finds his "tramp engineer" (character from Comrades #33) dying in the snow. This man tells Tom of a plot by the rejected lover of Edith to switch train orders on her to cause a wreck and get her fired. Tom throws a switch which prevents a wreck. But this freight comes thru running "wild." Tom

manages to board it and finds Edith on it. Edith had gotten wind of the plot and boarded the train and told the engineer but when he attempted to stop he couldn't. The abnormally low temperature had caused the forming of ice frost on the rails called "whiskers" and the train was literally "on skates." Engineer and fireman "bailed out" and Tom and Edith helpless to do anything on that engine with cars loaded with heavy railroad iron pushing on, slid down that mountain in as exciting a ride as has ever been written about in any novel. A very fine story.

The 4th group of stories should be called

Rainbow Mine Series

Contained in #46 thru 59. This series is just filled with logical and thrilling adventure of Tom and an enlarged group of friends in running a silver mine and a branch railroad that Tom has built to reach the mine. A mysterious character is introduced the mad "Hermit of Rainbow Mountain." Series ends with #59 which is the first large size issue as the size of the novels was increased at time of the enlarging of the other Street and Smith novels.

The 5th group of stories should be called

Desert Series

Contained in #60-62-63-64-66. In #60 Tom had an encounter with a drunken teamster. Later in the day a balloon unit of the US Army are to make a test flight from Rainbow City. Tom and three companions climb into the balloon to see the equipment. The drunken teamster for revenge cuts the guy ropes and Tom and his companions are carried off. Finally to come down in a desert. Have adventures aplenty till their rescue in #66 as a circus train had been wrecked on the edge of the desert some time before and wild beasts of all kind were roaming in search of food.

Comrades #61

This was the 1st story other than about Tom Wright in Comrades. The Do and Dare Weekly had been discontinued and the Red, White and Blue reprints which had been running in that weekly were transferred to Comrades. This # was titled; Phil Sterling's Ride for Life; or, The Charge of the Fire Zouaves. I have compared

the text with the Red, White and Blue issues and find that it contains two stories, interwoven together but the whole tale works out OK. In this issue of Comrades all of chap 1-2-3 and part of chap. 4 and all of chap. 8-9-10-11-12-13 are reprint of R, W & B Wkly #6.

Part of chap. 4 and all of chap. 5-6-7-14-15-16-17-18-19-20 are reprint of R, W & B Wkly #8.

Comrades #65

titled On Guard; or, Phil Sterling's Peril. The stories in this issue of Comrades are not interwoven.

chap. 1 thru 10 are reprint of R, W & B #10.

chap. 11 thru 19, reprint of R, W & B #12.

6th and last group of stories should be called

Baseball Series

Contained in #67 thru the last #72. Tom still has the Rainbow Mine but forms a baseball club and plays games in the far west. I never cared much for this series, to me baseball series in other weeklies were much better. I have never been too sure that the same author wrote this series as wrote all the other Comrades.

The 1st issue of Comrades #1 was dated March 31, 1900 and the last issue #72 was dated Aug 10, 1901.

The last issue of Comrades after the word The End had the following announcement. QUOTE With this number "Comrades" will be discontinued, to make place for a surprise, which our readers will soon see. Watch for it. UNQUOTE. I am still watching for it. I never knew what the surprise was to be. Perhaps nothing, maybe that was the surprise.

Yes, Comrades is a fine series of stories but they seem to team up with "the forgotten man." This is a series that collector's forget apparently. In the past three or four years I remember only 1 direct inquiry of me for this weekly and in the same space of time I do not think I have had half a dozen items offered to me in trade or sale. So I conclude that this weekly is rather scarce and that the demand is not heavy. If the demand should pick up even a little I feel sure they will be even priced, even now if one should decide to try and put together a set I think they would find it almost impossible to do except at a real high price.

But luckily for those who would like to read some of the stories at a low price, it can be done as Comrades from 1 thru 59 have been reprinted in several of Street and Smiths "thick book" publication. I have only three issues of "thick books" myself but on these three I have compared the text and each "thick book" contained a word for word reprints of four issues of Comrades. Thus I assume without real knowledge that "thick books" contain reprints all the way thru the Mining Series or #59.

In "thick books" Tom Wright's name does not appear in the title, they are called "The Young Railroader" Series. In the New Medal Library the # of the issues are 364, 373, 379, 385, 394, 402, 409, 417, 423, 432, 439, 445, 451, 459, 465. In Round the World Library I am not so sure of my information but I think only part of those issued in New Medal Library appeared in this other "thick book." Only 8 different Young Railroaders were issued #66, 68, 70, 72, 74, 76, 78, 80 and later #179 was a reprint of #66 and 181 was a reprint of #68. Possibly they appeared in other "thick book" Libraries other than the two mentioned, but if so I have no knowledge of them.

THE END.

KING BRADYS NOT RELATED

WATKINS GLEN, N. Y.—The first question in Liberty's March 9 Twenty Questions asks: "What old king and his young son solved more crimes than J. Edgar Hoover?" Your answer: "Old King Brady and Harry Brady (Young King Brady)." They were no blood relation, the similarity in their names was merely a remarkable coincidence.

—Percy W. White

NEW MEMBERS of H. H. B. for 1941 Nos.

126. Arthur Stedman, Rome-Verona Rd., Rome, N. Y. (new member)
127. Walter F. Tunks, 354 E. Market St., Akron, Ohio. (new member)
67. S. B. Condon, South Penabscot, Maine.
79. Fred P. Pitzer, 41 Woodlawn Ave., Jersey City, N. J.
119. Victor L. Neighbors, 304 N. State St., Litchfield, Ill.

NEWSY NEWS by Ye Editor

Brother members and subscribers keep writing in to tell me what a wonderful number the January Roundup was, and all the good things that went with it. I put my whole heart and so, yes, even my pocket book too, to make it a worthy number once more, now on the Lists of all the members in each issue, so far, about half the fellows think it would be fine to have the Lists in every month, providing I have the room, and the other half are the other way. Tell you what, I'll try it even 6 months, and if I can do it more often I will, how's that, O. K. Pards?

Now as to the article on the Harry Castleman books that came out in Dec. 1940 Roundup. Through some mistake or other, the Luck & Pluck Series were really written by Horatio Alger, Jr., and not by Harry Castleman, as the December number gives it. Also on the Christmas story, that was written by Uncle Billee Benners in the December issue, called "One Road to Heaven." Really this is not a dime and nickel novel article, but I thought you all might be pleased to have a little change in just one issue, but it seems I put my neck into hot water instead. Uncle Billee used to love that story, and as I've read it a number of times, I thought I was giving you all a little, well, sort of toast. Lots of the fellows wrote in telling me what a fine story it was, and asked for extras for some of their friends, while others hauled me over the coals for having just that one article in that number.

I try to please everybody, but I'm afraid I'm a failure. Ned Buntline seemed to have taken everyone off their feet, thank god, I'm back on terra firma again. It's a swell article, and there were many things in it that I never knew before, thanks to our southern friend and member, Herman Pitcher. Got any more good articles like this, down there, Pard, as you saved my bacon that time. Novel-nut Nonsense must be extra good, or I'd be in hot-water if it wasn't. The Little Beadles was swell, also Newsy News. Louis A. Godey was good, as well as other bits of news, such as "Charity of the Novelist," "Lucy R. Comfort," etc.

We try to make things as interest-

ing as we can.

Now as to the February Number of Roundup. Haven't had time to hear from the fellow members and subscribers on it yet. May be a few mistakes, but I hope not.

"A Memory," by Eli Messier makes us all wish that just such a time as that would happen in our own towns, and those high hats, if we wore them now, and the clothing to go with them people would think we were freaks that just escaped from a circus.

No. 69, which was left out, is really George Fields, 1419 Polk Street, San Francisco, Calif., who seems to be a bookseller by trade.

Sam Nathan is after the Dick Light-heart stories that appeared in the Wide Awake Library, also "A Nameless Sin," by Bertha M. Clay, a lover of the fair sex.

Coming back to the February Roundup again. What about Bill Burns article, "Likes and Dislikes, Then and Now?" Bill believes this is the poorest article he ever wrote! I for one, think it a very good writeup. Let's hear the comments, whether good or bad. I may be all wet, but I don't think so.

George French says he has just received two interesting nos. of Beadles Pocket Library #229 which was written by Harry Enton and 398 which seems to be all about Captain Jack Crawford. Both very interesting copies, I'll bet. George says that a few weeks ago, an unlucky streak hit the town, especially in his section, when a car killed his dog, then a car hit George's car, and knocked him and the car right over the curb. Then two men have been killed, no doubt by auto, as George didn't say, and the last episode was, a neighbor hung him-self in the garage. Seems when your unlucky day comes, it slides in with a bang.

Who has any of Student & School-mate, for the year of 1867. I have all around this date, but not it. Write ye editor.

Who heard the Life Story of Horatio Alger, Jr., on the radio Sunday, January 5th, 1941. They say it was fine.

How's this for a title, "Double Dan, the Bastard, or the Pirates of the Pecos," by Buckskin Sam. This appeared in Beadles Dime Library, No. 256. They couldn't get away with a

title like this on a magazine today, so says Brother Leichter.

We hear that Lou Kohrt of Milwaukee, Wisc., has moved to 2912 Arbor St., Houston, Texas. He now can visit A. W. Edgerton, 116 W. White Oak Drive, of the same city.

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65 in all, each story complete, no. 6 of Vol. 21 has no back cover.

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Ralph F. Cummings
Fisherville, Mass.

Two collectors to be proud of.

Albert Hamilton, claims to have the largest collection of "Dime Novels" in Maine, according to a fine write-up, that appeared in the Portland Sunday Telegram, Portland, Maine, Sunday February 16, 1941. Now we are puzzled, as there is a C. B. Hamilton, a member of the H. H. B., at this same address, Norway, Maine. Maybe Albert is a brother or a son.

Just the same, it was a very good write-up. Any one wishing a copy, send 10c to the Portland Sunday Telegram, Portland, Maine.

Well fellows, how many of you, have Mr. Randell's wants in the Harry Castlemann Book? Some price.

— SWAPS —

Have about 300 copies of Judge and Life magazines from about 1915 to 1930 to sell or swap for? J. D. Hardin, 634 Broad St., Burlington, N. C.

Have for sale or trade, G-Man magazines, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1935 to Vol. 20, No. 2, 1941, complete up to date, in nice condition, for what? James C. Morris, Gen. Del., Fairmont, W. Va.

Wants Young Sleuth Library Nos. #46-48; Happy Days #57. What's wanted. George French, 121 W. Passaic Ave., Bloomfield, N. J.

Wanted—Seaside Libraries by Harrison Ainsworth. What do you want. Wm. M. Burns, 15 Cottage St., Rockland, Maine.

Have over 600 Merriwell Series, Algers and others to trade for novels. What have you, what do you want? Eli A. Messier, 117 Morton Avenue, Woonsocket, R. I.

Novels to trade for novels, send list for mine. L. C. Skinner, 36 Chaplin St. Pawtucket, R. I.

Have Buffalo Bill Stories, Old Sleuth Weekly, Young Wild West, Brave & Bold and Secret Service. Want Jesse James, Young Klondikes, Old Cap Colliers, etc. Let me know how you will trade. C. G. Berger, 170 Atlantic St., Atlantic, Mass.

Have Beadle's Dime Libraries, #18, 21, 43, 54, 57, 90, 99, 198, 224, 246, 944 to swap. What have you in Western Weeklies? S. B. Condon, So. Penabscot, Maine.

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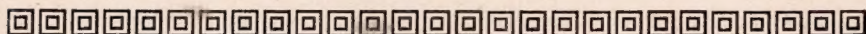
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